NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

WILDLIFE WATERING FACILITY

(No.)
Code 648

DEFINITION

Constructing, improving, or modifying watering places for wildlife.

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied as part of a conservation management system to provide drinking water for wildlife.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

In areas where new, additional, or improved watering places are needed to increase the range or improve the habitat for wildlife.

CRITERIA

All planned work shall comply with Federal, state, and local laws and regulations.

Wildlife watering facilities for wildlife shall be established where year round water is not available within one-half (½) mile of the area under consideration.

Criteria for Springs and Trough or Tank Wildlife Watering Facilities

Wildlife watering facilities using spring development or troughs and tanks shall be designed in conformance with NRCS conservation practice standards Spring Development, Code 574 or Trough or Tank, Code 614.

Capacity of tanks or troughs shall be based on the expected number of wildlife to use the facility and expected water consumption. Trough or tank shall have a minimum capacity of 100 gallons and have a dependable water supply.

Troughs or tanks used for small birds and small animals shall be fitted with an access ramp and an escape ramp. The ramps shall be made of material that is rough enough to provide footing for the animals. As an option, trough or tanks may be placed in the ground with access provided at ground level.

Livestock shall be excluded from trough or tanks.

Criteria for Earthen Wildlife Watering Facilities

Earthen wildlife watering facilities shall be designed in conformance with Florida NRCS conservation practice standard for Pond, Code 378.

Site Investigation. Site suitability and design shall be based on adequate investigations and surveys as described in the National Engineering Field Handbook for Conservation Practices, Chapter 11, Ponds and Reservoirs. Watering facilities shall be constructed in soils that are capable of maintaining a supply of water during normal rainfall years.

Side slopes. Earthen watering facilities shall be constructed with stable side slopes. Access will be provided so that one-half (1/2) of the total perimeter slopes are no steeper than 3 horizontal to 1 vertical (3:1).

Size. Wildlife watering facilities shall be as small as practical but not less than 10 feet wide at the point of access and 50 feet long at the design water surface elevation. The depth of the watering facilities shall be a minimum of three feet below the seasonal normal low water table.

Inlet protection. If surface water enters the pond in a natural or excavated channel, the side slope of the pond shall be protected against erosion.

Excavated material. The material excavated from the wildlife watering facility shall be placed so that its weight will not endanger the stability of the facility side slopes and so that it will not erode back into the pond by rainfall. It shall be disposed of in one of the following ways:

1. Uniformly spread to a height that does not exceed 3 feet, with the top graded to a continuous slope away from the watering facility.
2. Uniformly placed or shaped reasonably well, with side slopes assuming a natural angle of repose. The excavated material will be placed at a distance equal to the depth of the pond but not less than 15 feet from the edge of the watering facility.
3. Shaped to a designed form that blends visually with the landscape.
4. Used for low embankment and leveling.
5. Hauled away.

Protection. The exposed surfaces of all areas disturbed during construction shall be seeded or sodded as necessary to prevent erosion. Areas requiring vegetation shall be vegetated in accordance with NRCS Florida conservation practice standard for Critical Area Planting, Code 342.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consideration should be given to locating wildlife watering facilities within one-fourth (¼) mile of sites where a lack of water limits wildlife habitat.

Wildlife watering facilities will have minimal effect on the water budget

Wildlife watering facilities may impact the downstream flows or aquifers that could affect other water uses or users.

Wildlife watering facilities may effect the erosion and the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substances that would be carried by runoff.

The use of native vegetation may be the best alternative to vegetate disturbed areas.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing wildlife watering facilities shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

The plans shall include as a minimum, spacing of watering facilities, construction details including depth, minimum cross sections, and vegetated requirements.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Wildlife watering facilities must be adequately maintained if their purposes are to be realized through the expected life. An operation and maintenance plan will be made for each wildlife watering facility and given to the landuser.

Special considerations shall be given for maintenance needs during the planning, design, and construction of the facility.

The wildlife watering facility should be inspected periodically and especially after heavy rains and during prolonged dry periods to determine whether it is functioning properly.

Access should be checked periodically to ensure adequate wildlife access to the watering facility.

Areas subject to erosion shall be checked periodically to ensure adequate vegetation is maintained to prevent erosion. Repair eroded areas and revegetate as needed.

REFERENCES

National Engineering Field Handbook for Conservation Practices, Chapter 11, Ponds and Reservoirs.
NRCS Conservation Practice Standards
Critical Area Plantings, Code 342
Pond, Code 378
Spring Development, Code 574
Trough or Tank, Code 614